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Pilot Breakfast Program Established.

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A federally funded school breakfast program in Florida offers a nutritious meal to approximately 1800 pupils per day. This program is available to the poor, to children who miss breakfast because of bus schedules, and to any other students at a school where the meal i s offered. Those who can afford to pay a nominal fee; otherwise, breakfast is free. Comments from some participating schools note improvements in pupil attendance, disposition, and learning. (NH)

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ABOUT THE COVER

Florida's Eleventh and Twelfth Months Program was a national first and has been widely copied by other states. Its enrichment classes during the summer give young people an opportunity to stretch mind and muscles when regular schools aren't meeting. Typical of activities is this Duval County boy's artistic creation from pieces of wood, done in a summer art class. A look at what is involved in this popular program is featured in this issue of FLORIDA SCHOOLS—FUN IN THE SUMMER SUN: THE ENVY OF THE NATION, *Page 10.*

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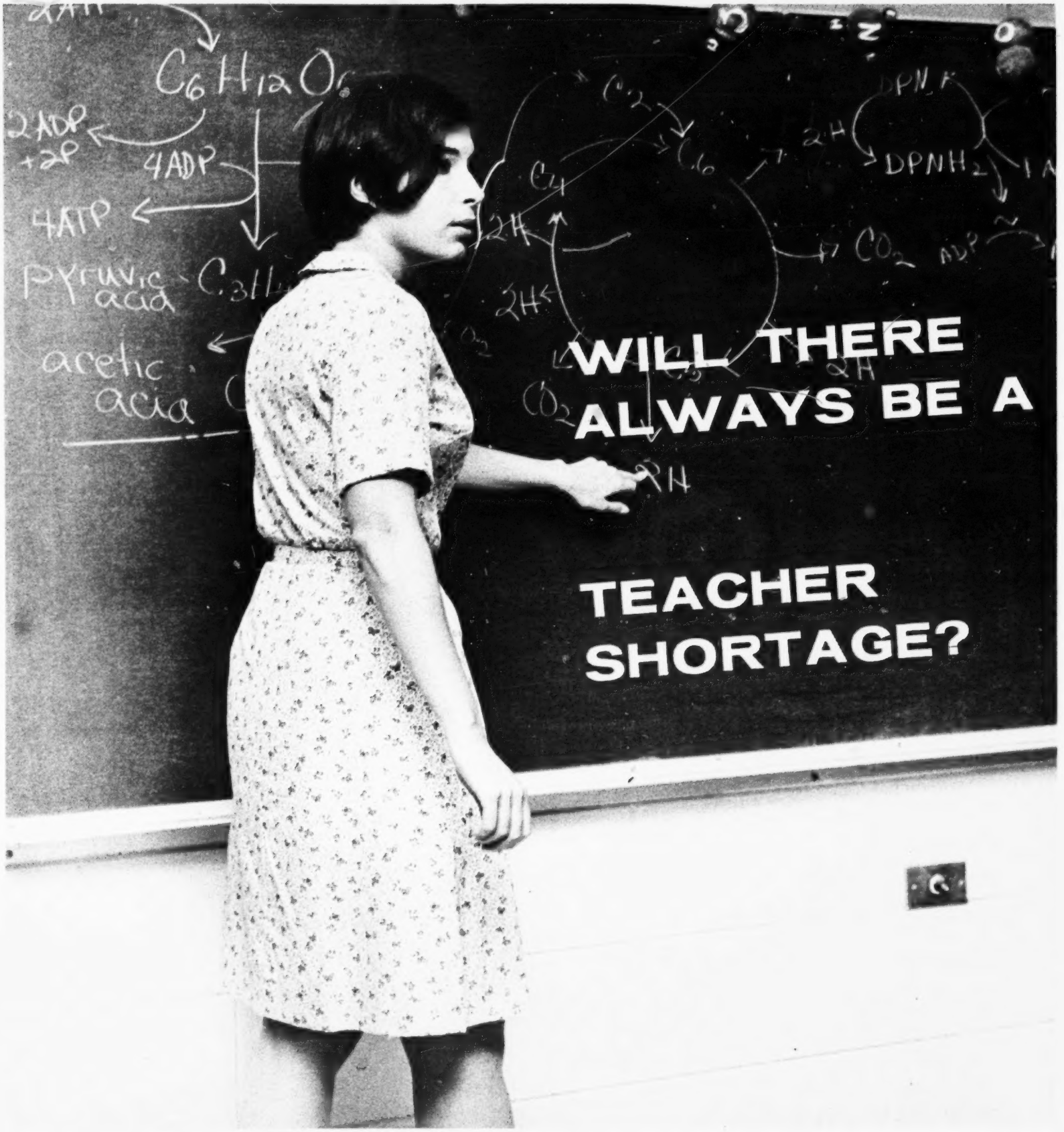

The problem of adequately staffing schools is both a quantitative and a qualitative one. From the standpoint of quantity, there have been few teacher shortages—someone has been found to fill virtually every teaching position that has been created.

From a qualitative standpoint, however, there is a teacher shortage. A substantial portion of Florida's children are taught by persons who are inadequately prepared. Ten percent of the persons now teaching have deficiencies in professional education course work. Also, 14 percent of the classes offered in Florida schools are taught by persons who have deficiencies in subject matter preparation.

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PILOT BREAKFAST PROGRAM ESTABLISHED

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Juan and Esperanza come to school each day as early as 7 a.m. They stand, waiting at the door of the school dining room, until 8 o'clock. They are full of anticipation, but they stand quietly—they don't get out of line, they don't play, they don't scuffle. Juan and Esperanza are hungry, and they are waiting for breakfast.

These youngsters are two of the 346,889 children in Florida's public schools who come to school without any breakfast. Figures show that approximately 28 percent of the pupils in the Sunshine State miss this important meal. Nutritionists at Florida's Agricultural Experiment Stations say that children who habitually skip breakfast often have a lower mental alertness and letdown in energy, so apparently good school grades and a good breakfast go together.

The process of learning virtually ends when a human being becomes uncomfortably hungry and when a child appears at school in the morning, having had little or no breakfast, he might as well have stayed at home. The teacher's effort is wasted and the cur-

There's nothing like a tasty breakfast to get the day off to a good start and this youngster is well on his way to a successful day with the books.

Breakfast can be a time for contemplation, but skipping that meal makes most people less alert. Good grades and a good breakfast seem to go together.

riculum, the long hours of professional preparation, the value of textbooks and teaching aids are lost on him. A hungry child not only injures himself, but his discomfort may affect the learning of a whole class.

The breakfast program in Florida, which is still in the pilot stage, was set up by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. Purpose of the program is to furnish a breakfast for those students who are especially needy, or who arrive at school hungry because they have been bussed to school from a long distance. Last September, Florida county school personnel assisted the State Department of Education by making a one day survey of food habits in 1,806 schools with an average daily attendance of 1,226,883. This survey revealed not only that 346,889 pupils came to school without breakfast, but also that 31,652 pupils had not eaten a meal the previous night.

Of this total number going without breakfast, 31,856 were deprived because of economic need; 27,631 had no breakfast because of arriving at school on an early bus; 113,155 cited "other reasons" for not eating breakfast.

BY JOAN FORRESTER

Miss Forrester is a consultant in the School Food Service Section, State Department of Education.

Open to All Pupils

Many schools throughout the nation and Florida were quick to take advantage of the federal funds available to establish pilot breakfast programs, based on economically needy and long bus ride pupils, but open to all pupils in attendance at the selected schools.

Nutritional Requirements For a School Breakfast

A school breakfast shall contain as a minimum:

1. One-half pint of fluid whole milk.
2. A three-fourth cup serving of fruit or full strength fruit or vegetable juice.
3. One serving of whole grain or enriched bread; or other bread such as cornbread, biscuits, rolls, muffins, etc. made of whole grain or enriched meal or flour.
4. One of the following: one egg or one cup of whole grain, enriched or fortified cereal; or one ounce of meat, poultry, fish or cheese; or two tablespoons peanut butter.

Who wouldn't wait in line for a plate loaded with grits and eggs and homemade biscuits, topped off with fruit juice and milk? And he wouldn't drop all that on a bet.

As of today, 17 pilot breakfast programs are in operation in five Florida counties—Calhoun, Collier, Indian River, Marion and St. Lucie. These 17 schools serve approximately 1,800 pupils daily. At the end of February, more than 61,000 children in 469 schools in the nine southeastern states and Puerto Rico were eating breakfast at school. This was an increase of 20,000 children over the number who were taking part in the breakfast program at the end of last year.

But this is just a beginning—further study by the State Department of Education shows that in 45 selected Florida counties there are 440 schools with a total of 43,787 pupils who are in need of daily breakfasts, because of economic status or because of early bus schedules. And indications are that still more schools and children, as yet not identified, are also in need of this nutritional aid. Certainly there is a need in Florida for additional breakfast programs.

Breakfast costs are met in three ways: reimbursement (15 cents per breakfast) from Federal Child Nutrition Act funds; use of federal surplus commodities; and a nominal fee charged to pupils able to pay (in Florida the charge ranges from 10 cents to 25 cents per breakfast). Where most of the breakfasts are free or at reduced price, the schools may need to use funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to supplement Child Nutrition Act funds to assure an adequate income.

Consensus among county school personnel is that the breakfast programs are bringing results. Students are gaining weight, learning better and have better attendance records.

Comment From Schools

Comments from schools having pilot breakfast programs include many like these:

• "Early morning illnesses are cured with a good breakfast. Contrary to some opinions, the free lunch and breakfast programs didn't initiate a feeling of 'the world owes me a living.' In a nutritional study in our class, we discovered that all the basic needs were met in these two meals (breakfast and lunch), except the need for one or more serving of meat daily."—Highlands Elementary.

• "Attendance improved . . . had more vitality at the beginning of the school day. Learning improved in all areas of instruction. Pupils were not as touchy, were able to get along with others in the classroom better. Not as easily offended. Pupils were on time to school. Breakfasts stimulated pupils."—Frances K. Sweet Elementary.

• "Pupils perform better."—Bethune.

• Insured a measure of balanced nutrition . . . lessened wiggliness and inattention."—Lake Park Elementary.

• "Free breakfast and lunch programs mean a logically and a common form of compensation between the state and families in inadequate position to solve those problems. Though some families took advantage, I was happy to see the children receiving this aid. Some seemed to be suffering from poor nutrition."—Immokalee Elementary.

For many of the children, this has been a new experience—they weren't accustomed to eating breakfast. They just took going to school hungry as a way of life.

There are many Juans and Esperanzas in Florida who need and want breakfast. The opportunity to help them become better pupils and citizens can be through these breakfast programs. □